

VZCZCXRO3325
RR RUEHLMC
DE RUEHSN #0470 1462211
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 262211Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1135
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 000470

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MCC ACTING CEO BENT INAUGURATES TRANSNATIONAL HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. During an April 27-28 visit to El Salvador, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rodney Bent participated in the formal groundbreaking for the Northern Transnational Highway. Bent met with President Saca to express his appreciation for Saca's support. He also discussed the future of the MCC project with members of the incoming Funes government, including their hope to speed up compact implementation. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) MCC Acting CEO Rodney Bent and VP for Compact Implementation Darius Mans visited El Salvador April 27-28 to meet with the outgoing and incoming governments and formally inaugurate the Northern Transnational Highway construction.

¶3. (U) On April 27, Bent met with FOMILENIO administration and executive leadership to emphasize efficient, effective, and transparent Compact implementation. Bent also reiterated MCC dedication and support for finding flexible solutions to improve compact execution to maximize the benefit of the \$461 million investment. In a courtesy call with outgoing President Elias Antonio "Tony" Saca, Bent expressed the MCC's appreciation for Saca's leadership and dedication to the MCC and its principles of good governance, social investment and economic freedoms.

¶4. (U) On April 28, Bent, Mans, Saca, and Charge d'Affaires participated in the groundbreaking ceremony marking the commencement of the Northern Transnational Highway in the northern town of Metapan. The event drew 500 participants and generated positive news coverage.

¶5. (U) In an April 28 dinner, Bent met with Foreign Minister-designate Hugo Martinez and Technical Secretary-designate (Chief of Staff to the President) Alex Segovia to discuss the continuation of the MCC program under the next government. Martinez and Segovia stated their support for the MCC and expressed a desire to improve the speed of program implementation, improve communication strategies, intensify the focus on transparency of program funds, and review the Productive Development Project to identify possibilities to generate more employment.

¶6. (U) COMMENT: Bent's visit marked a positive end to the MCC's association with the outgoing Saca government as well as providing an opportunity to engage the incoming Funes administration. The long-awaited groundbreaking ceremony was a powerful signal of the continued US commitment to poverty reduction and economic growth in El Salvador. END COMMENT.

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